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An Earnest

1477 dd. 14

PERSWASIVE

TO THE
SERIOUS OBSERVANCE

OF THE

Lord's - Day.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

IT must be granted, That such as would be saved must be very diligent and earnest in the use of the means of Salvation: and for this reason, that they must be very careful to make the best use of the *Lord's Day*, which is a peculiar Season for their Spiritual Edification. In order to which, we are commanded by GOD to cease our *worldly Labours* and *common Diversions* on this *Sacred Day*, that we may the more entirely wait upon GOD, and advance our Spiritual and Eternal Interests. And the very Nature of the thing shews us how reasonable it is, that we, who must live forever in another World, should set apart a considerable part of our time to prepare for it.

So that on this *Holy Day*, we may, without Breach of Manners, avoid unnecessary Company, refuse impertinent Visits, and silence improper Discourse, that we may enjoy the more full *Communion with God*, and prosecute the Business of our *Holy Calling* without Distraction. And whosoever does so, will find unspeakable Advantages in it, to his great Comfort in Life and Death.

For we are assured in the *Fourth Commandment*, That God hath *Blessed* as well as *Consecrated* this Day: *Wherefore the Lord BLESSED the Sabbath Day, and Hallowed it.* So that we oppose our own Blessings, when we neglect the Duty of this Day, or pollute it by any thing contrary thereto. It is a Day of *special Grace*, wherein the King

of Heaven sits on his Mercy Seat, in a more gracious manner than on other Days; having declared that he will bestow peculiar Blessings on them that duly observe it. And what true Lover of his own Soul can be wanting in laying hold of so blessed an Opportunity of obtaining Favour with *Almighty God*, and receiving the Riches of his Grace and Mercy in *Jesus Christ*? Especially considering, that we know not how few of these *Days of Salvation* may be granted to us, and how dreadful it is to die in the Neglect or Prophanation of them.

And let none imagine, that this was a Commandment to the *Jews* only, and does not reach to us *Christians*; on the contrary, we find in the *New Testament*, that our Lord keeps up a Title to a *Seventh Day* still, which is therefore called the *Lord's Day*, (*Rev. 1. 10.*) And we find it strictly observed by the Apostles as a Day of Assembling for the publick Worship of God, and Ministration of the Word and Sacraments. (*Acts 20. 7.*) And we read that our Blessed Saviour *appeared* to them several times, and *blessed* them on this his Day, (*John. 20. 19, 26.*) and he sent his *Holy Spirit* upon them on this Day, (*Acts 2. 4.*) And therefore, since we *Christians* are much more obliged now (than the *Jews* were) to the Observation of this Day, by what our Blessed Saviour has done and suffered in order to our Salvation, we cannot, without gross Absurdity and Ingratitude, think that the moral

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Obligation of it is ceased. To be of this Opinion, is to oppose the Established Orders of our *Governours* in *Church and State*, and we are required by Publick Authority to bring those to Punishment who are found offending herein. And all Christians have as much reason to rise up and oppose such as would level this *Holy Day of God* with other common Days, as they would those who are digging down the Sea Banks: For by Mens breaking in upon the Limits of this *Sacred Day*, a whole Tide of Vice and Prophaneness will flow in upon us, to the Dishonour of God, the Contempt of Religion, and the pulling down of Plagues and Calamities upon us; which all Men are concerned to do their utmost to prevent.

As our good God therefore has separated this *Blessed Day* to his peculiar Service, for his own Glory, and the Good of Men both in this World and the next: Let us not disappoint these gracious Ends by *Idleness* or *Formality*, nor by *worldly Business* or *carnal Diversions*. Let no common thing keep us from the publick Worship of God, either in the Fore or Afternoon; and let as much of the rest of the Day as we can be spent in the Devotions of the Closet and Family; in Catechizing of our Children and Servants; in Repeating what we heard; in Reading good Books; in Prayer, Singing of Psalms, and good Discourse. And if these sweet and blessed Exercises are tedious and irksome to us, 'tis enough to affright us to think, how unfit we are for Heaven, where the Love and Praises of GOD make a great Part of the glorious Entertainment; of which, the due keeping of a *Christian Sabbath* is the happiest resemblance that we have upon Earth.

But here, alas! too many amongst us grow uneasy at these holy Restraints; and being unaccustomed to deny themselves any thing that their Carnal Heart desires on other Days, they know not how to restrain themselves on this; and having no inward Relish of Religion, they are soon weary of it: and therefore they ask, What Harm there is, if when the *Publick Service* is over, they spend the Remainder of the Day in recreating themselves in the Fields, or in a Publick House, or in any common Diversion? Yea, some go farther, and will not be persuaded that there is any Harm in Gaming, Foot-ball playing, Dancing, and the like; on the remaining part of this *Holy Day*.

But, Sir, whether you will believe it or not, *God hath sanctified this Day*; that is, he hath separated it to his own peculiar Service, from all our worldly Affairs and Business. But we must not forget to set it apart for Ease and Sloth, nor yet for Mirth and Diversion, much less for Sin, to recreate the Body, and to indulge the Lusts thereof,

and the Vanities of this World: For we are sworn against these in the *Sacred Covenant of Baptism*. But this Day is principally set apart for the Worship and Honour of God, and the Spiritual Improvement of our Souls, and Preparation for Heaven. And to lose the blessed Opportunity of this; in publick or private, for either worldly or sinful Ends, is a base mis-spending of our Talent, a manifest Contempt of God and his Authority, and a pernicious Neglect of our Salvation: And such Persons as will not be convinc'd of this now, will be taught it in a very terrible manner hereafter. God's Judgments upon Earth against the *Prophaners of his Day* have been too numerous and too notorious to be deny'd, which are but as Drops of that Storm of *fiery Indignation* which will at last consume his *Adversaries*. And surely they cannot be accounted other than the Enemies of God, and of their own Souls too, who reject the Blessings of the *Lord's Day*, by using it to a quite contrary End and Design. To prevent which, our Church has required a solemn Humiliation before God for the *Prophanation of the Day of our Lord*, as well as for *Murder, Adultery*, or any other immoral Act: as we find in our *Liturgy*, where, after the rehearsal of the *Fourth Commandment*, we are required to implore Forgiveness of God for all that we have done contrary to this holy Law of his; and to pray that he would give us his Grace, that we may never commit any such grievous Sins any more, in those Words, *Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law*.

And forasmuch as our *Supream Lawgiver* has in this Law of his required, that such as have *Strangers within their Gates*; that is, *Guests* or *Lodgers*, do look to it, that those under their Roof do not prophane this *Sacred Day*: How are such as keep *Taverns* and *Publick Houses* particularly concerned to keep their Houses clear of Company on this Day. Since it appears, that we must answer to God for any Prophanation of the *Lord's Day*, discernable and preventable by us, that was committed by those under our Authority in our Houses, wherein, as Governours, we ought to bear rule to the Glory of God.

And therefore, however many Masters of *Publick Houses* flatter themselves with the Gains they make by following their *Trades*, and humouring their *Customers* on this *Reserved Day* of our Lord, they will find a very sad reckoning at last before the Judge of all the Earth. When it will be made appear, that they have supplied many Persons with Instruments to *fight against God*; in that they suffered them to sit Drinking and Revelling in their Houses, whilst they ought to have been at the Publick Worship of God, or to have been employ-



ed in the pious Government of their own Families. And whatever Friendship there now seems to be between such as live in these pernicious Vices, and such as administer Fewel to them; it may at last break out into an eternal Enmity and Aversion in the other World: Where the one may say, Had you not admitted me into your House, and supplied me with Wine and other things which were not matter of Necessity, but meer Vanity and Impiety, I might have kept the *Lord's-Day* better, and have escaped this Place of Torment. And on the other hand, the other Party may reply, Had you not frequented my House on the *Lord's-Day*, and prevented me and my Servants from serving God in his House and my own, we might likewise have been more happy.

That such Expostulations and Upbraidings will be like to be in the other World, (where every one will see the Baseness and Perniciousness of Sinning against God) is very probable from what we see in Persons whose Eyes God pleases to open here on Earth.

I knew a Gentleman, who, after a sharp Sickness, betaking himself to a new Life, sent for the Master of the Tavern where he had mis-spent much Time, and many *Lord's-Days*, and with such a Countenance as made him even tremble, checkt him severely for allowing Company to sit Drinking on the *Lord's-Day*, or upon any other Day, to Excess: and gave him such an affecting Charge to amend this for the future, as startled him whenever he call'd it to mind, as the Person to whom he spake afterwards confest.

1. Say not then, What Harm is there in drawing Drink to such Persons as require it on the *Lord's-Day*? Since if it be unnecessary, it cannot but be very sinful; because at best it makes both them and you mis-spent the *Lord's-Day*, and many times occasions very heinous Disorders and Transgressions on it.

2. Say not, You shall lose your Trade, and fail of a Livelihood, by observing this part of your Duty. But remember, that God rained down a double Portion of Manna on the Day before the Sabbath, for the use of those that observed it, (*Exod.* 16. 29.) And be assured that you cannot lose by your faithful Service to so good a Master.

3. Say not, Others do it, and I will not be singular. Since the Law of God, and not the Practice of others, must be our Rule if we desire God's Kingdom.

Lastly, Say not, That if it be a Sin, you must answer for it your self, and that no Body else is concerned in it. No, all Publick Sins are Publick

Offences and Scandals; that is, they occasion others to fall into Sin; are the common Reproach of Christianity, and the Causes of publick Calamities. Upon which account therefore, all that would be faithful to their *Christian Vows*, ought to oppose the Prophanation of the *Lord's-Day* by all lawful and advisable Means, whether it be by giving Information of it to the Magistrate, or otherwise, as that which tends directly to the Dishonour of God, the Decay of Religion, and to the Destruction of the Publick Good.

We are all ready enough to lay hands on such as break any Law which concerns our selves. If any one steals or robs us of any little matter, we alarm the Neighbourhood, and raise all the Power we can to apprehend the Thief, and are at Charge to prosecute and punish him according to the Law: and without doubt we do well in it; for the tolerating such Offenders is Injustice to the Publick, and a Cruelty to the Innocent. But then, Why are we so slack and so unwilling to do the like to such as prophane the Holy Day and Name of GOD? Are these lighter Matters? Has not God a Right and Title in his own Day? Or rather, Is not the true Reason, because we are not so sensible of Offences against God, as against our selves? But this is a very bad State, and a sure Sign that we have not that Love and Zeal for God which every True Christian ought to have. Let us therefore rouse up our selves to do this Honour to God; or we shall never be honoured by him.

To sum up all. The *Lord's-Day* is in its Institution a Day of Blessing, and of infinite Good to Men: but Men may by their Idleness or Prophaneness turn their Blessings into Curses. But as this is great Folly, so it will end in dismal Sorrow and Anguish; especially when these Days of the Son of Man are over. When Death closes up the Day of Grace and Mercy, and there shall be no more Sabbaths, nor Sacraments, nor Sermons, nor Prayers for ever: Then will the Prophan Person wish in vain for the Return of that which he hath irreparably lost by despising it. Like Esau's begging with Tears (but to no purpose) for the Blessing which he had sold for a sensual Morsel.

O my Brethren! Know your Christian Privileges, improve your blessed Sabbath, and the invaluable Seasons of God's Grace. Our Day, of Life and of Grace, is far spent, and the Night is at hand; Let this quicken us in these last Hours of our Day, to provide the things which make for our Eternal Peace, lest they be ere long hidden from our Eyes, and for ever debarred from our Enjoyment.

and for ever blessed be the name of our Father
 Father, be it that he will send forth his Spirit
 to comfort the sorrowful and to give us grace
 for this question in the last of those whom they
 and of Grace, is the first and last of all
 last before of God's Grace. Our Day of Life
 lived, improve your little substance, and the more
 O my Brother, I know your Christian Principles

1. Say not, I will not be troubled.
 2. Say not, I will not be grieved.
 3. Say not, I will not be weary.
 4. Say not, I will not be sick.
 5. Say not, I will not be old.
 6. Say not, I will not be poor.
 7. Say not, I will not be despised.
 8. Say not, I will not be hated.
 9. Say not, I will not be forsaken.
 10. Say not, I will not be left alone.
 11. Say not, I will not be without help.
 12. Say not, I will not be without food.
 13. Say not, I will not be without clothing.
 14. Say not, I will not be without shelter.
 15. Say not, I will not be without friends.
 16. Say not, I will not be without love.
 17. Say not, I will not be without hope.
 18. Say not, I will not be without faith.
 19. Say not, I will not be without charity.
 20. Say not, I will not be without grace.

